

Rebellion

and



Flowers

PARNASSUS

REBELLION *and* FLOWERS

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We would like to thank everyone who submitted material to Parnassus, and express our gratitude to those teachers who gave us their students' work for our consideration. We hope that in the future, more of you will take advantage of the opportunity Parnassus affords for presenting entertaining and imaginative writing to Northern Essex Community College.

The interspersed sentences are from journal entries by students in Comp I EN 4401 13.

DAY DREAMING

I am facing forwards
My eyes are on the board
My head turns casually as the teacher walks
back and forth
but I am not here

I'm on my bike riding down a road
The road curves then straightens
then curves again
The air whistles through my helmet
I feel so loose and free

Two x square equals 26
My motorcycle turns into a classroom seat
Where can I go this time?
I look out the window
and see the bright day
that pulls me out of the classroom again

I'm in a canoe floating downstream
I cast my line into a shady spot
Leaves float slowly past

Do the problems on page 82
My fishing trip is ruined
My fishing rod turns into a pencil
and my canoe into a desk

—Gary Forcier

FREE WHEELING

It's cool, scratch that, it's cold! The months of conditioning are to be tested. The water bottles are frozen, gorp prepared, light carbohydrate breakfast eaten, warm clothes over cool gear, and finally, well-checked bikes with spare parts are loaded in the truck. The ride in dawn's dim light is exciting with little traffic to annoy us. Our muscles are tense, we must relax.

Wow! What a lot of bikers. Are there really this many nuts around?

It's difficult to wait for registration and numbers but finally everyone is ready to be timed out. Everyone is still a winner.

On the bikes at last! The sun is coming over the water. It's still cool. Must not rush. To pace oneself is a lesson of life, not just for long distant racing. The first hills are approaching. This separates the men from the boys. Comments are made about some people burning themselves out too early, as we pass, speeding up the hill. Everyone should know his own capability. No one walks, in spite of the steepness. It's not cool anymore. The need to cope with obstacles such as people, cars and dogs increases as time goes on. One hour and twenty miles out. It is time for a light snack. Is this all there is to it? This is easy, I feel great.

The scenery is beautiful along the way. More and more cars go by. Some have super drivers, some have morons. It doesn't matter, we feel sorry for them all, especially those with windows shut and artificial air conditioners when we have natural air conditioners. Watch those dogs! Many of us already have our dog bite patches. Forty miles and it's time for another pick-up with a walk over a suspension bridge. What a view! The bridge tenders wave, people wish us luck. Forty miles, two hours, most are still winners. Everyone has a different strategy for reaching his goal - no matter what that goal may be in life.

Not so hilly, although hills are relative as are many things in life. They seem so small when I walk, ride my horse or drive my car. But when I ride my Bike or cross-country ski, they seem so large. Sixty miles and three hours. Many people know they are not winners even in their attempt to be in condition.

The longest part is now. Oh, no! Hills again! The scenery doesn't seem so pretty, it seems so hot and the hills are huge. Did I condition enough? Does that young upstart who flew by me hurt? Just a little, perhaps? That's not an evil grin I feel, is it? My legs hurt and the sweat is really pouring down my brow. I'm certainly not glowing like a lady should be doing. It would be so easy to join the "also rans" in the sag wagon. No! Time passes, I'll make it. Nothing is worth quitting, everything should be finished. I'll forget this pain tomorrow. I don't seem to be flying effortlessly fast as the wind now, but I am moving forward and that's all that counts. At last, the eighty mile marker in four hours. Water is warm now, but it feels good poured over my head.

The end is in sight! Everyone should feel this elation. Fellow "bikies" cheer each other on. The wind is cool, the pace is fast, it seems all down hill. How good that finish line looks at the One Hundred Mile marker. It seems effortless to fly over it and savor the results of a job well done. Not just the climax, but the up and downs of reaching it, the happiness and pain. Well, it really wasn't so bad!

-by Ruth Young

LAFAYETTE SQUARE

Bottles screaming
Music fighting
Couples breaking

Hey baby, you look like you could use a protector.
Would you like me to be your sugar daddy?

Alcohol blackout
Telephone obscenities
Lethal overdose

Hey baby, what chou think ya doin'? You do as
I say. I **am** your sugar daddy.

Motorbikes sneering
Night fear
Knives whispering

Lord protect me. The others may stay here,
I will leave -- someday.

--Nancy Twombly

THE CITY

Built upon ages of lives gone by
It stands, lost in its own exhalations
An enigma to all who do not belong.

Changing in mood
It beckons, but holds itself aloof
So that those who would be adopted
Remain orphans in its sight.

--Diana Gosselin

MY TRAVELS IN HAVERHILL

I wake up one Sunny Mornin' with the Sun streaming through my Bedroom curtains. I run to the Window and notice it's going to be a Glorious day. Thank the Lorde. I put on My Draperies and heade for the Breakfast Table. I hastily chew my biscuits which are Prepared for me on the Table.

Yes, it is a fine Day. As fine a Day that could be in these Northern parts of Boston called Reading. I have quite a ride cutt out for Myself Today. I must deliver a Package of Goods to the Toddman's over in Haverhill Towne.

I go out to the Mare, who, in the Process of Eating Oats 'n' Barley, is reluctant to budge at my Yankings. When I finally manage to Overtake Him, we proceede down Brooklyne Streete and are on our way.

We partake on our journey over dusty Well-travelled Roades. The Dust kicks up behinde me like a Storme of Sand in its ferocious Intensity. I cross the Meadow and Come to Reste at an Aqua-Coloured Poolside to view the Ducks on the Horizon. As time goes bye, They Waddle over closer to Me as if They Would be looking for some type of Attention. I Reache in my Leather Pouche and notice that I have nothing with which to feed My little friends.

I snap Back to Reality and Begin to think that Maybe I should be on my way so that I May have time to stop In and say a Prayer that Mrs. Webb may get Well.

Looking off into the Distance, the Sun seems to be rising in the Sky. We must be approching twelve noon. The nearest House isn't for several Miles yet and the Toddman's Home is not that much farther.

The air is Warm and before any time at all I arrive safely at their Home. Mrs. Toddman, a thin, frail woman in a long, full skirt, invites me in for some freshly baked warm Bread and Jam. This, I kindly accept withe much gratitude. Then I begin my journey back.

As I ride through Towne, I notice Mr. Simpson who smiles and throws me a wave. He happens to Own the finest Countrie Store in all the Villages of the North.

Before long, I come to rest at my Home. The Day is not over yet, but Many Chores await Me in which I must Help my Mother. I also must go to Classes which are held in the Afternoon. School is four miles Away, but I enjoy Going. Life isn't all Bad when travelling around the Area North of Boston.

--by Jean McLaughlin

THE STREET

The dark velvet eyes are full of hate and they are all around me. Before I even walk across the bridge they follow me in silent anger. I am a gringo. I am therefore rich and despised.

The narrow bridge ahead of me is old and the cement is loose and falling away. Climbing up the gentle curve of the bridge, I pass the center of the Rio Grande which divides El Paso from Juarez. I pay three cents to go through the turnstile into Mexico.

The walls along the side of the bridge are swarming with children. The bitterness in their eyes is overshadowed by their excitement at spotting me. The chattering increases as I move toward them. They begin to beg, little hands reach out to touch me as I move past them. Instinctively, I move away from dirty fingernails and crusty brown hands. The older boys compete with each other in offering to dive into the muddy river after any money I will toss in. "Hey mister, only a nickel, only a penny," echoes behind me as I reach Juarez Avenue.

There, a young girl of about fourteen sits in the shade of a retaining wall. She holds a sleeping infant, whose little fists clutch the air; even now, in his dreams, he is struggling for survival. Their clothes are rags, and the child-mother is barefoot. A slim brown hand is held out as I approach and look into an unlined face already weary of life. There is little joy in giving her the quarter. Instead, a sadness intrudes into the pleasure of the day, for I have come here to go shopping. This is the street of bargains for those who are willing to play the game.

The curve of the bridge descends, and the road ahead lines up the shops and restaurants and bars along the sidewalk like battered soldiers, neon lights blinking bravely at the afternoon sun. The road is paved, but dust covers it as it covers everything here in the southwest. The wind is rarely still, and the brown sand swirls and dances, covering anything exposed to it with a beige blanket of grit.

As I hurry across the road, a vintage purple Chevrolet with the top smashed in just barely misses a white haired man pushing a wooden cart with melons heaped high upon it. He gestures at the driver of the car and swears at him in Spanish, but this only produces laughter from the young man at the wheel.

Parked along the road are the cars of those who dare to drive across the bridge and tangle with the Juarez drivers. As I walk along, about every ten spaces there is a man tending the meters for the cars. He makes sure the meters do not run out for the people parked there. He keeps small children from climbing on the cars, and the older ones from stealing anything loose. He is paid about three times what the meters receive, which is two cents per hour.

The old buildings gaze at you with streaked glass and patched up fronts. They have that distinctive odor which tells you unmistakably that the timbers have been there a long time. I pass one that has recently been remodeled and it looks like a stranger in the street. Shiny plate glass and chromium trim look out of place between broken facades from the past.

The hucksters appear at the entrance of each store as I go by. "Come in mister, good bargain here!" "See, good leather purse, only twenty-five dollars." I stop and ask what is their best price. "For you mister, only twenty dollars." I shake my head and answer that it is too much money; I live in El Paso and am no tourist. I offer him six dollars. His lean face contorts and his cat-like eyes sharpen. He knows that I will buy, and he wants it to be from him. He wipes his forehead in seeming desperation and his eyes flash. "Oh no mister, you don't give me enough. This is genuine leather, hand-tooled." Hopefully, "You take it for fifteen dollars?" I laugh, say "No thanks!" and walk away. He springs after me, "Come back, we make good bargain mister, only twelve dollars. I don't make nothing out of it, mister." This is a lie and we both know it. I move on, knowing this same charade will be replayed along the street.

Nowhere on the street will you find a fair price, with one exception - and Mauricio's is hard to find. About halfway down the line of buildings is a narrow doorway. A sign about two feet by four feet with faded printing announces Mauricio's. As I walk in, dirty, smudged brown plaster walls telescope toward the back of the building where the blurred arrow painted on the walls indicates the store can be found. I do find it at the back of this musty building: four separated rooms, each opening into the hall.

The first room is the brightest and contains all the jewelry. The collection is huge; pins, brooches and pendants hang from the wall. Glass cases enclose rings, chains and earrings. Diamonds, turquoise and lapis-lazuli are in the front case. From wall to ceiling are drawers of assorted jewelry.

Another door opens up to reveal leather in all forms, from bowling bags to display skins. The last two rooms are for the copper and silver displays.

You do not bargain here and the merchandise offered is what they claim it to be. Once, on an earlier shopping trip, I had purchased some Chanel #5 for my mother, which turned out to be colored water. I am careful where I shop now.

Not being able to find the purse I want here, I return to the street and head north. It is impossible to lose your way, for all you have to do is glance toward the sky and the dark line of the Franklin Mountains dividing the city of El Paso stands out clearly.

This side of the street branches out into another street which contains the houses of prostitution. They are legal in this border city. It is still afternoon, so all is quiet. A few interested tourists, full of curiosity, are going by the open doors and giggling to themselves.

I go back to the place where I have decided to bargain, and the lean-faced man recognizes me. The game is on. He brings the purse back to the counter and says, "A good buy, only fifteen dollars." I shake my head and offer him seven-fifty. He groans, protests that he is making no money, and prices it at ten-fifty. Nine dollars is my return offer. He waves his hands, flexing skinny brown fingers, and I notice how clean his nails are - good for business, I think. "No, mister, no." I thank him and start to walk away. He says ten dollars, I say nine-fifty, and the bargain is sealed, the purse wrapped in old newspaper, and I am on my way.

At the approach to the bridge I stop at the liquor store with its huge displays. Kalhua....\$1.70, rum....\$1.45 a quart, gin....\$1.45 a quart, and tequila....\$1.00 a quart. It is a boozers' paradise. I purchase a quart, which is all I am allowed to bring back, and walk over the bridge paying two cents to pass through.

I look back. There are two little children asleep in a dirty corner of the bridge support, the child-mother is gone, and I am feeling guilty.

Tina Both

THE PANTHER

Before I learned to worry, fret ruminant, feel guilty, have debilitating anxiety attacks and acquire a myriad of psychosomatic ailments, I enjoyed a good, full life; I was four. I was a natural meditator and could sit for hours "Being" a chestnut, a worm, a panther,Wonderwoman. I possessed a great propensity for "stepping outside for a look around."

I think I had premonitions of what was to come when I entered grammar school, so I persuaded my mother to let me skip kindergarten, which gave me an extra year of being an unselfconscious free spirit. I was a fast learner and it didn't take me long to begin to decompensate. I became an expert at destruction, self-fulfilling prophecies, and I often wonder if I'll ever be a panther again. It doesn't surprise me that I'm flunking typing.

--Mary Meagher

BREAKTHROUGH

The red leafbud
looks like somebody
screaming: arms
flung wide, trying
to reach another
phase: relieved,
a new face -- calm,
absorbed in sunlight.

--Comp. II EN4402 27

THE CARDS' QUEEN

Placed in the middle,
a question to everyone.
Where I am, only
myself and the two
on either side know.

Moved around. Constantly
shuffled, thrown away,
picked up. The game
starts over again.

I am dealt to
the left, this time
with my family: King
Jack, Ten & little nine.
Together again. A winning
family.

--Ginger Trudel

A POEM FROM VIETNAM

Take a man, then put him alone,
Drop him 12,000 miles from home,
Empty his heart of all but blood,
Make him live in sweat and mud.
That's the life I have to live,
And why my soul to the devil I give?
You "peace boys" rant from your easy chair.
You just don't know what it's like out there.
While in Vietnam your boys are dying,
You burn your draft cards, you march at dawn,
Plant your sign on the White House lawn.
You all want to "Ban the Bomb,"
There's a real war in Vietnam.
So use your drugs, have your fun.
And then refuse to use a gun.
There's nothing else for you to do.
And I'm supposed to die for you?
I'll hate you till the day I die!
You made me hear my buddy's cry.
I saw his arm a bloody shred.
I heard him say. "This one is dead."
It's a large price he had to pay,
Not to live another day.
He had the guts to fight and die.
He paid the price, but what did he buy?
He bought your life by losing his.
But who gives a damn what a soldier gives?

"Peace upon earth" was said. We sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison gas.

--Jeffrey Griffith

THE WAR ROOM

It was a dark, rainy day, the kind of day when you can't count on anything. President John O'Conner walked up to the helicopter sitting on the White House lawn. For as long as he had known Anton Checkoski, the Ambassador from Russia, he had secretly hated him. The President held out his hand for the ambassador to shake, and welcomed him to the United States in a formal way.

O'Conner and Checkoski walked down a long hallway in silence, for both thought they knew their fate. The President opened a door at the end of the hallway, and the two men went inside. They sat in big white chairs that seemed to swallow them up.

O'Conner looked at Checkoski and thought to himself that he looked like a frog with his eyes bulging out of his head and his fat face centering around his mouth.

The President opened a file and said, "Anton, we have reports that your country has just launched a new satellite, and it took your country almost two weeks to notify us about it. Our Intelligence believes that this may be a killer laser satellite."

"Mr. President," said the ambassador, "do you really think that we would launch a killer satellite? Have you forgotten our treaty?"

"Yes, I do remember it," replied the President, "that's why I am so concerned. If it is not a killer satellite, then what is it?"

Anton smiled and said, "You may not believe me, but it is a television satellite."

"Well then, how come it is only twenty-five miles above earth, and pointed directly at the U.S.?" asked the president. "If it truly was a T.V. satellite, as you say, shouldn't it be pointed at Russia?" O'Conner thought to himself: Does this turkey really think that we are going to buy his story?

As the talks progressed, Anton began to sweat more and more, and he began wiping and rubbing his hands on his pants. And the only thing that O'Conner could think of was that this man, this top official from Russia, looked like a squirrel who was about to get hit by a car.

The phone rang and the President answered it and asked Anton if he would like some food. Anton said no. The President then rose from his chair, asked the ambassador to excuse him, and left.

He then entered the board room, where the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his cabinet were already waiting. "I want a decision!" the President said. General Cable stood up and said, "We have decided that we will take any measure, even war, to get the Russians to remove their satellite." President O'Conner said, "Yes, I agree," and left the room.

He walked back to the room where the ambassador was waiting, rested his hand on the door knob, and then entered. O'Conner walked in and told Checkoski that they did not believe that the satellite was for television purposes only.

Upon hearing this news, Anton became enraged at O'Conner, and said, "I have hated you for a long time, just as you have hated me. I have nothing to lose now, because it appears that I have failed my mission. When I return to Russia I will be put in prison for life or killed, so the murdering of a president will not matter too much." And Anton pulled out a gun and stuck it in the stomach of the President.

O'Conner hit Checkoski in the face and fought him to the ground. They struggled for what seemed like eternity, and Checkoski still had the gun pointed at the President. O'Conner suddenly grabbed the gun and pointed it toward Checkoski as the ambassador fired.

The Secret Service, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Cabinet came running when they heard the gunshot. The President explained how he had fired in self-defense, and had not even pulled the trigger. He also added that it did not matter anyway. "I have instructed the armed forces on red alert to commence an all-out attack on Russia to show them we mean business," the President said.

All the men in the room looked in horror at each other, and finally General Cable walked over to the President and said, "But sir, we were wrong. We have made a mistake. Our information was false. We have just learned that their satellite is being used to broadcast televised sports events throughout Russia!"

—by John Regan

FIRST MEETING

**Oh how I worried, for a week before,
Never this nervous, as I walked towards the door.
Opening it wide, I took a deep breath,
Let it out slowly, you'd think it was death.**

**I put on a smile, stuck out my hand,
After introductions, I took my stand.
It was not as bad as I imagined to be,
These people I met were as nervous as me.**

—Ginger Trudel

Steven was still Steven, thriving on the egoism of his job.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

John Jerry had a memory.
The memory contained yet did not conceal.
Why don't you go out and play ball, John Jerry?
Said his father but not his mother.

John Jerry had a name.
John Jerry that it was.
You should go to the alma mater,
Demanded his mother, not his father.

He played his father's ball.
He went to mom's alma mater.
Don't study, come out with us,
Said a roommate who wanted his money.

Four years wasted, by then grad time.
Fresh out and into the work force.
Marry me, John Jerry,
Said Jane Marry, who wanted his mom's and dad's house.

John Jerry finally for a minute thought,
To hell with my mom's and dad's alma mater and ball,
And to my father's and mother's house and Marry's license.
I am not anybody's dream with a memory,
I am John Jerry and I have a name,
John Jerry that it is and damn it I have a brain.

—Steven Mangano

I feel like a vegetable, sitting at my machine punching for pennies.

STILL LIFE

The three pears lie on the table like large boulders, each one with its own crevices and crannies. The catalpa pod stretches out, occupying itself like a twisting river across the table. The catalpa leaves are large fields of green grass on the dull table, while across the river, the milkweed pods are fallen trees with spikes and sheared-off branches. The birch bark, a melting snowbank, is mostly white, with dirt sprinkled throughout.

—Charles Plummer

POEM

Oh Lord, what happened to our mother Earth?
She is weak and sick.
She is blind and has lost her hearing.
Her tongue has dried-off,
And cannot speak.
Her body is full of scars.
Her feet cannot support her majestic figure of Queen.

Where are your children?
Why don't they take care of you?
Have they forgotten their mother,
The one who gave them birth?

They are too busy,
They don't think about me.
They are looking for pleasure, only.
They don't see what they have done to me.
I will die lonely in the most remote corner of the Universe.
Nobody will have memories of me.
I feel pity for my children
Because I know that when I die
They will be hopeless,
They cannot survive without me.

—Raul Ojeda

ONCE UPON A WINDOW PANE

Sitting,
Staring,
Daydreaming . . .
And suddenly,
I was released from my cage.
Leaping from my body,
I fell,
Through,
Out,
And upward.
I was floating,
Over the trees,
Through the sky,
To the clouds.
I felt my Self, in total freedom.
I became like
A wind,
A flame,
An ether . . .

--Ruth Iannazzi

Once Joan saw the white silk floating in the breeze, she couldn't get enough milk weeds, and before long, the street was covered with the silky threads from inside the pods.

THE WHEAT FARMER

In the distance the mountains
take on a purplish tone
offset by the bright yellow
color of wheat
lit up by the sun.

Above the field of wheat
the crest of my house can be seen.

I begin to feel tired thinking the day
will soon end.
The rotating wheel of the combine
hypnotizes me.

The combine swallows the wheat
like a mammoth horse eating hay.
The sound of the bails of hay can be heard
as they flop out from the rear
bounding once or twice
before they settle.

As the earth tilts
the sun tips below the mountains.
I feel my tired muscles and empty stomach.
I know what is waiting for me:
supper, a soft bed, and another day's work.

--Gary Forcier

NEBRASKA BREEZE

Eleesha and Joseph were a happy couple, or seemingly happy, on their small farm in rural Nebraska. They had been married for almost ten years now, as they enjoyed the simple life of raising livestock and growing corn. Joseph was a hearty, stocky fellow in his late twenties. He toiled long, hard hours in the fields as generations of his predecessors had done. His wife, Eleesha, was a small, fragile and shy little thing who was the central meaning of Joseph's existence.

Their small farm was rather secluded, like a solitary lily pad afloat on a serene pond. Neighbors were virtually nonexistent and strangers were rarely seen, except for an occasional traveller speeding down the dirt-surfaced, lightly-travelled, dusty road. Each and every afternoon, one would find the routine activities of Joseph, working in a distant cornfield under the nasty Nebraska sun, while Eleesha buzzed around the house, like a bee, cleaning and preparing dinner in anticipation of her husband's return from the fields.

The evenings brought about similar routineness as they would eat dinner and discuss their thoughts of the preceding day.

"I'm almost finished planting, dear. I wish we had enough money to buy that tractor....just think of the time I'd save."

"Oh Joseph! Why must we save our money for a tractor? We almost have enough for a trip. You know, the one I've always wanted to take," replied Eleesha.

"Don't be silly, Eleesha. You know how badly I've wanted that tractor. Anyhow, a trip is foolish."

Eleesha wantingly replied, "But Joseph, dear. I received some free brochures in the mail, today. Just look....London, Paris, Rome, and all these other wonderful places. I just want to get away from this farm, just once, and live a little."

Joseph was silent, but his anger was apparent. His face was emotionless as he left the table and retired for the night, without kissing his wife. He laid in bed for a short while, staring into the darkness, contemplating his wife's request. This sudden display of restlessness by his wife gave him a very uncomfortable feeling. Thoughts of his cherished wife ran rampant through his mind, as he gazed into the emptiness of the breezy Nebraska night. He then imagined the emptiness of his life if he found himself without her. He grabbed hold of his fleeting thoughts, realizing the absoluteness of the relationship that they had built, and knowing that she would be back to her logical self in the morning.

Meanwhile, Eleesha was sitting on the front porch in her rocking chair, where she could usually be found on this type of night. She was thumbing through the brochures that the mailman had brought her earlier in the day. Her mind was wandering many miles away from the meager existence on the farm. She envisioned herself dancing in a royal ballroom, amongst princes and aristocrats. She saw herself in the arms of an eloquent, young, handsome prince, waltzing to and fro within the magnificent ballroom. She looked up at the handsome prince and smiled. She again looked up at him only to see the face of her beloved husband, Joseph. Then she returned to the reality of her life and felt ashamed for even imagining such things.

While she was dreaming, her brochures had been scattered over the porch by the wind. She gathered them and put them on the kitchen table before joining her husband in bed. She gently kissed him on the forehead and fell asleep.

The next day was as beautiful and serene as the one before. Eleesha was awakened by the punctual crow of the rooster. Joseph was already in the fields, by this time, planting corn. She decided to wear one of her husband's favorite and more appealing dresses, in an effort to make up for the foolishness that she had displayed on the evening past. She went about her daily chores.

It was about ten o'clock when she went outside to hang the laundry. She noticed something off in the distance. A man appeared, walking in her direction along the narrow road which passed by their farm. As the man drew closer, she noticed his eloquent manner of attire and gait. He strutted up the dusty road like a peacock. He wore a very fancy tuxedo and a wide brimmed top hat. It was obvious that he was a foreigner.

As he approached the yard, she became awed by his handsomeness. As he came closer, a feeling of both astonishment and fear shivered through her body. His face was that of the prince that she had seen in her dream the night before, while sitting on the porch. She retreated to her house as the man approached the front door.

He knocked on the door and she unconsciously straightened her hair before answering.

"Excuse me, my fine maiden, but my bloody automobile has overheated some number of miles down the road, and I was hoping you would be kind enough to let me have some water."

Eleesha was entranced by his presence and eagerly replied, "Well, of course, but please come in and have some lemonade, for you must be thirsty after your long walk on that dry, dusty road."

All thought of her husband had left her mind as she became fascinated by the stranger. He sat at the kitchen table while Eleesha fetched a tall, cool glass of lemonade. He noticed the brochures.

"I take it you are planning a trip to Europe. It is very beautiful. I'm sure you will enjoy it."

"Oh, no," she replied. "My husband will not permit it. You sound as if you have been there. Please tell me about it."

"Oh, yes. I've been all over Europe. My family is of royal blood and I have travelled the world over, on diplomatic matters."

She was enchanted by the stranger. She handed the lemonade to him. His dark, inviting eyes saw right through hers as they made eye contact. A feeling of extreme sensuality came upon them and they embraced each other. Soon, the two were coupled on the kitchen floor. The stranger begged her to come away with him to all those faraway places for which her heart yearned. She hurried upstairs to gather her clothes and left a note for her husband. She and the stranger dashed off down that long, lightly-travelled road from the farm.

It was close to noon when Joseph returned from the cornfields for lunch. He was dismayed by the fact that Eleesha was not out doing her daily chores. He thought that she might have taken a nap and went upstairs only to find the note she had left for him. His heart was shattered and his life now meaningless. He frantically stumbled out the door and towards the barn.

At that instant, a small cloud of dust sped up the road towards the house. It was the mailman. He left his truck at the foot of the walk and skipped merrily to the front door. He knocked several times, but got no answer. He then proceeded to the barn, thinking that Joseph might be there, tending to the animals as usual at this time of day.

"Hey, Joe. It's me, Harry. I've got some more of those silly brochures for the little woman."

The barn also had no inhabitants, so he went around back to see if Joseph was in sight. Suddenly, a scream could be heard from behind the barn. The mailman observed Joseph, dangling on the end of a rope from an oak tree...with the dry Nebraska breeze whistling through his broken heart.

—by Tony Diamio

It bothers me to think that after eight months he writes and wants to start some sort of relationship that neither he nor I know how to handle.

PEST

A few months ago, my wife determined the household was not complete since we did not have a cat. I didn't care for the idea too much, but I could see we were going to have a cat - no matter what I said. She came home with a five-month-old cat that had been given to her. After a \$40.00 trip to the vet for shots, I was the not-so-proud co-owner of a cat. So far, life has been far from boring. The cat has become trapped in my briefcase once. He assaulted my stereo speaker once and became trapped under it while Palmer of Emerson, Lake and Palmer was doing a wild drum solo. I let him stay under the speaker ten minutes! Ha! Ha! I am the one who has to give him a bath when he rolls in cow shit. I have to break up the fights he gets into with the wildlife. He has eaten my breakfast right off the plate once - for which he received a solo flight thirty feet through the air into a snow bank. He has wrecked my desk several times. I generally have to get his food - clean his cat box - and in general, take care of him since my wife is often working. He has been a pest since day one, so that is what I have named him - Pest! He knows his name. In spite of all the "abuse" my wife says I give him, it is my side of the bed and me he is always trying to sleep with. He often climbs in my lap and sleeps while I study. When he wants something, I am often "told" first. Perhaps this is because, deep down, I really like the little bastard - and he knows it. He also knows that when he is scared - and stuck up a tree - and it is becoming dark - I'll be the one climbing the tree to rescue him - not my wife! Christ - what a fool I am!

--by Mark Whitney

POEM

A strand of sunlight
plays upon
the golden coat
of the sleeping Labrador.

--Richard Pauta

A CAT

Lying stretched in a sunlit tree
Half-hidden by wind-lifting foliage
I lazily cock a bored ear, or whiskers
At a dog barking in the distance.

Up here, nothing disturbs serenity.
Sleepily I yawn and turn to contemplate
The length of my tail.

--Diana Gosselin

BIRDY

The fortyish year old woman looks like a bird. Her white hair, silvered, is like a crest on its forehead. Her legs are long; I can picture her perched on one leg, her bony shoulders hunched like wings. The dark-colored neck makes her appear huddled, trying to keep warm. Her mouth is constantly moving, pecking, chirping, and even honking.

--Mary Jane Allen

THE SILENT VISITOR

As I sat on a fallen tree, I suddenly saw a flash of gold and brown, a chipmunk. He came to rest on top of a stump and then he saw me and froze, his small eyes staring at me. After a while his eyes blinked, almost like a wink, and his little chest rapidly inhaled and exhaled. Then he twitched his nose and stood on his hind paws and put on a display, washing and scratching himself, all the time his tiny ears pointed to hear the slightest sound. Then, with a twitch of his tail, he was off in a blur of color.

--Charles Plummer

If you were talking to her, you would think she would like herself cloned.

INDEPENDENCE and POISON IVY

The affair had started in the usual manner. Kelly had been dissatisfied with her marriage for many reasons, but after refusing several extramarital affairs, in desperation, she finally started going out with a married man. A year and a half later she left her husband. Kelly constantly asked herself why she had broken her marriage vows to have this affair. She was embarrassed because she had behaved so foolishly and irresponsibly.

When Quincy, Kelly's lover, left his wife in August, after being kicked out, he still put Kelly in second place. He cancelled dates he had with her to be with his brother-in-law; or he would call to tell her that he had to take his son somewhere. Finally, two incidents occurred which focused the affair for Kelly, which decided her to end it.

The first incident was an admission by Kelly, to her girlfriend, Sue, that Quincy simply did not have a sense of the ridiculous. Sue, who knew Quincy, agreed. As they talked, Kelly and Sue were leaning out of a window. While listening to the pool next door malfunction, the noises from the pool struck the girls as hilarious, and they started to laugh. Each agreed that Quincy would not have found the noise so funny.

The second incident involved Kelly's talent for getting into ridiculous situations. She had a parakeet, called Narcissus, which liked to ride on her shoulder. One day, near the end of August, she thought it would be nice to take him for a walk in the woods nearby. He enjoyed himself so much he flew off her shoulder and into a tree. He either lost his sense of direction or liked his freedom so much he did not return to her. Regrettably, the tree he chose to perch on was surrounded by poison ivy. The capture of the bird took about an hour. When Kelly got home, she took a shower, hoping that she had washed the oils off her skin in time. Unfortunately, she was too late, and within twenty-four hours she had a bad case of poison ivy all over her arms and legs.

Quincy was neither sympathetic nor supportive when he saw her with the poison ivy. He told her she was a fool to have taken the bird for a walk. On the other hand, her neighbor downstairs, Jack, offered her some benedryl to stop the itching. Kelly was hesitant to take it. Two days later, after being tortured by itchy legs, she asked Jack for the benedryl.

It was Friday and Labor Day weekend had begun. Quincy called to tell Kelly that he was going to Canada to attend the funeral of his grandmother. Kelly was disappointed, but there was nothing she could do. She went to Sue's house to tell her the news. While they were talking, Kelly realized that she was not really upset that Quincy had gone. She told Sue that she was much more interested in Jack than she had previously admitted to herself. She decided she did not want to be Quincy's lover anymore. He could go back with his wife.

Kelly observed that Jack's light was on when she arrived home. She put her two boys to bed, went downstairs, and knocked on the door. Jack let her in. The first thing that Kelly did was announce that she was getting rid of Quincy. Jack said, "Oh?" Then they sat down and talked about Kelly's problems for several hours, he in his chair, she on the floor.

Later, while they were discussing more mundane matters, the family across the hall started fighting. Jack opened his door to listen to the fight. He motioned to Kelly to join him. The fight was between an alcoholic mother and her willful son. As they listened, Jack and Kelly started to laugh. It was a situation in which one either laughed or cried. He touched her arm and she felt a current of arousal pass through her. Jack invited Kelly into his room, but she refused, as she felt there was no need to rush. She thanked Jack for their talk and went back upstairs. Three hours later she came downstairs again and knocked on his door. Their initial attempt at love-making was a classic example of what not to do. They fumbled and bumped into each other like inexperienced teenagers, but were able to laugh about it afterward.

When Quincy arrived home from Canada, he called Kelly. She informed him that she was not interested in continuing their relationship. Quincy was stunned. He asked if he could come over later that night, just one more time. Kelly assented, but confided to Jack that Quincy was coming over that night.

Kelly nervously awaited Quincy's arrival. When he did come, he tried to win her back sexually. As they lay on the bed, there was a knock on the door. Kelly answered it. It was Jack. He apologized and explained that he needed his benedryl back. Quincy left an hour later, after having failed to convince Kelly to remain as his lover. She had, however, generously given him a parting gift: a case of poison ivy. Kelly was relieved to see him go.

--by Nancy Twombly

CHANGING PARTNERS

Cindy and Rick, happily married for six months, were sitting down, enjoying breakfast in their cozy beach-house, when there was a knock on the front door. "Did you invite anyone over, Rick?" asked Cindy, not expecting company so early. "No, but I'll get it," Rick said as he got up to answer the door.

Standing on the steps was a fragile-looking girl with long, straight, chestnut-colored hair, and brown eyes. "Jenny! Come in. What brings you here so early in the morning?" "Is Cindy here?" asked Jenny in a depressed voice.

"Jenny!" Cindy hollered from the kitchen. "How've you been?" "Pretty good, but I really have to ask you something." Cindy could sense uneasiness in Jenny's voice. "Well, what's the matter?" she asked impatiently.

"I lost my job and got evicted from my apartment because I couldn't afford to pay the rent. I was wondering, well -- if I could stay here for awhile, just until I get a job and can pay for my own place?"

"Well, Rick, what do you think? We've got an extra bedroom. She could sleep in there." "It's O.K. with me," Rick said with a smile on his face. "Do you need any help to move your things in?" he asked. "Not really, I only have some clothes and a few odds-and-ends. Thank you both very much. I appreciate it. I didn't know where I would go or what I would do if you said no."

It was enjoyable to have Jenny staying there. She was a very happy person, easy to get along with, and very intelligent. Cindy liked having her there to talk to when Rick worked nights. But she also thought about Rick and Jenny being alone together all day. Rick had said he enjoyed having her company in the mornings and afternoons when he would have been bored otherwise.

After a few weeks, all Cindy could think about was whether or not Rick was starting to like Jenny. She and Rick seemed to get along so well, --too well, she thought to herself.

Soon she started ignoring Rick and Jenny. She tried to put her jealous thoughts out of her mind, but she couldn't. Cindy finally came out and asked Rick if he was beginning to like Jenny. He laughed and said, "No. You should know that I love only you. Is that why you've been acting so strangely? Are you jealous of Jenny?" She did not answer him; she just left the room.

Cindy's insecurity made her wonder about Rick. She could remember how much Rick liked Jenny before they got married and moved away to the beach, and the way his eyes lit up when Cindy first introduced them to each other. She was sure in her own mind that something was going on between Rick and Jenny, so she started avoiding them and spending her time alone. She only talked to them if they talked to her first.

Cindy would go to work every morning, and Rick and Jenny would sit and talk about how Cindy was acting and about how badly she was treating Rick. They would take long walks down the beach together with the waves splashing over their feet.

They soon found that they really did like each other and had a lot in common. They hardly ever saw Cindy. She was there at dinnertime, but she was not good company. All she would do is answer questions asked of her, question them briefly about their day, and give them dirty looks. She even slept in a separate bedroom from Rick. She wouldn't even discuss the problem with Rick when he confronted her with it. She had become obsessed with the idea that Rick and Jenny were having an affair.

Rick did not appreciate his wife's lack of affection. He thought she was acting like a ridiculous, moody adolescent, since there was nothing going on between Jenny and himself. Rick didn't like the treatment he was getting at all, and was becoming quite upset.

Finally, he could take it no longer. He went to Cindy's room late one night and they had a terrible argument. "I've always been faithful to you!" he screamed. "If you don't stop acting like a jealous, insecure fool, I'm going to leave!" He stormed out of the room, hoping her attitude would soon change, but Cindy didn't believe him when he said he was faithful. She yelled down the hall behind him, "Leave, get out of here, just pack your things and go!"

The next afternoon, as Rick was finishing moving out of the house, Jenny came up to him, very upset. She was feeling guilty about the whole thing and blaming it on herself. Rick told Jenny, "Hey look, kid, it's not your fault! If it hadn't been you that Cindy thought I was fooling around with it would have been someone else." He then asked, "Jenny, would you seriously consider going out with me after I get this divorce going? I can't live with Cindy's jealousy, and maybe, after I'm free, we could have a life together." "Sure!" Jenny agreed happily. "If you two aren't going to stay together, then I'd like to."

—by Carol Brandolini

LAST SEMESTER, YOU AND ME

The semester break was just what we needed:
A chance for us to get reacquainted,
Time to reflect on how much I love her,
How our marriage has held up, despite isolation.

While I play student, running around campus,
Making new friends, talking with teachers,
Studying in groups, grinding out papers,
She explains to her folks why we never visit.

I'm working part-time, away half the night;
Then, alone in my study with the stereo on,
She glides in to bring me a beer
In a frosted mug; she is thinking of me.

We sat through another depressing season.
The Celtics aren't at all like they were
When we got married, but neither are we.
The trip to the game is an evening together.

The Vega died, we've got new-car payments,
And the house needs painting, and the lawn
Needs mowing, and I have a calculus exam –
But she smiles and kisses me good night.

I'm sitting here thinking to myself
She believes in me, and trusts in me,
And gives me the room I need to grow,
Waiting patiently for the end of school.

So I run sixteen hours a day
And every course I try for an "A" –
It's my way of saying to her:
Without you, I could accomplish none of this –

And even if I could, it would mean nothing.

--Bob Pomerleau

POSSESSIONS

The townspeople filed into the front room of the general store, shaking their heads in disgust, whispering about the indecency that had been committed. The crime had upset the tranquility of the small town and sent the people into a panic.

Jake Gibson sat in a wobbly wooden chair, his back towards the audience. He had no lawyer. No one believed him innocent, but he seemed unconcerned, lost in his thoughts....remembering the first day he saw Alice, a beautiful spring afternoon, the sky was a blue-green, the wind flowed gently, playfully after a rainstorm. She was in a meadow, picking flowers. She looked so beautiful, like a goddess, her long, light-pink dress, her golden hair. He had to have her.

The trial had begun, and Jake was unaware of the Judge addressing him. "Did you hear me son? How do you plead?" the Judge asked again.

"Guilty, I guess."

A hum of whispers seized the room.

"Son, do you realize the punishment for murder is hanging?" the Judge asked.

"Yes sir, I do."

His answer brought the courtroom into an uproar, but Jake's mind had drifted again....Why couldn't everything be like it was before? Alice had hated noise. She loved the meadow; it was her place to escape. Why must a person so lovely be so deceiving? She said she loved me, she was mine and no one else's. She shouldn't have lied to me. I told her she'd be sorry. I'd never allow her with another man, never.

The somber-faced jury had returned with their verdict. "Jake Gibson, the jury finds you guilty and you will hang tomorrow at sunrise," said the Judge.

The door to the rusty jail-cell opened with a grinding sound like the wheels of a locomotive screeching to a halt. "Here's your supper, Gibson. I hope you enjoy it because it's your last." said Sheriff Wells.

Jake was lying on a straw-filled cot, staring up at the dirty, cobweb-filled ceiling. A couple of long-legged spiders were spinning their new home....home. Home. That word seemed so foreign. What would they be doing at home right now? Oh God, it's so hard to remember what everyone looked like. Ma always had such a warm, friendly, oval face, like a picture of the Virgin Mary. She was a holy woman. She used to say a rosary every night for all of us. And Pa always took great pride in everything he did. He said, "Son, if you're gonna do somethin' and people know who you are, then do it, and never hang your head over it. Be proud you're a Gibson."

"Hey, Gibson, are you gonna eat that food, or am I gonna take your last meal away from you?" the Sheriff shouted, like a burst of thunder on a clear day....Once, long ago, the days had been filled with transparent sunlight and warm, gentle breezes, caressing his face like the tail of a thick-furred kitten. The only sounds were the flowing air and the splash of the waterfall, his secret place. On afternoons when school had not gone well and everyone else was bragging about his high marks, Jake would go to a sheltered spot in the woods where water from the falls collected in a tiny pool which whirled around like swirling serpents looking for their prey. This was his private paradise. This was everything he needed and wanted. What are you doing here? You're trespassing! A little boy, one of Jake's classmates, peered out from behind a clump of blueberry bushes. Can I stay and play with you? Please, Jake? Very well, but remember, this is mine, all mine....

The sun seemed to rise unusually early, filling the gray-gloomy sky with vibrant light. A crowd of citizens gathered outside the jailhouse. It was time.

Sheriff Wells entered Gibson's cell. Jake was lying face up, eyes opened wide. "Come on, son, it's time." Was he saying something? All Jake could see were the Sheriff's lips moving in an uneven rhythm. "Do I have to handcuff you and drag you up to the scaffold?"

"No, I'll go." How they will all look back on this and think it a pity to have hanged a man like me in the prime of life. He sighed deeply and shrugged his shoulders. Soon he would be together with Alice and she would be all his.

-by Paula Cultrera

Alice is watching too much television, and her mind has become fantasy lane.

I dreamed last night that every time I entered a contest or bought a lottery ticket, I won. I ended up with about \$50,000.

CITY LIFE

I live in the city; oh, pity poor me.
The beauty of nature I cannot see.

Ugly concrete juts ever high
To mar my vision of the sky.

A scarlet sunset I may behold
Only through structures grey and cold.

Even the soaring man-made bird
Invades my peace like a dirty word.

I am a prisoner by self-selection
Of things I built for my own protection.

—Rita Aeed

I'm really beginning to hate the word **Friday**. It means rushing home from school, chasing the mailman for my check, and skipping over to the mall to dazzle everyone on Friday night with "Another New Outfit."

OAK

As is true with most oak trees, the majestic oak on the side of the busy road was just starting its leaves when most other local trees were already getting their new growth. But the oak knew - he was, after all, 200 years old - that there was no hurry and that he would still have his leaves after the others were bare. It would be his rusty brown leaves that would rustle during the winter snow storms. This spring would be more fun than usual, for he had company. A thousand-pound Belgium colt had been brought home to the farm. A paddock fence had been put around a small area, including his base. There was no need to protect his trunk, although there would be many times when the young colt would feel like helping his new teeth come in. Oak trunks really didn't taste very good.

Summer came and the oak grew what he felt were the most magnificent leaves ever. And how that colt appreciated it as he stood there and dreamed and grew that hot summer.

Fall came and, just as he thought, he kept his leaves long after the others were losing theirs. The leaves that did fall, the colt didn't eat because the large amount of tannic acid in them made them quite bitter. Many acorns were scattered for the future and the small animals. The colt thought they were fun to chew on and play with occasionally as long as oak was careful not to drop too many of them on him.

Winter came and oak sheltered colt from the wind - even though sometimes it seemed colder than it was because his shriveled brown leaves made so much noise. Oak didn't care; he would hold onto some of them until the new leaves started coming.

His home was a busy place. There were cows and chickens out back off the road. Much food was grown for the people who stopped. It started in the late spring with rhubarb, peas, and raspberries and continued through late fall with pumpkins, squash, and apples. Many people came, although oak wasn't sure whether they came for the food, to see his lovely friendly colt, or for himself - after all, he was mighty handsome.

Before he knew it, his colt weighed three thousand pounds and could reach even higher branches to scratch. Oak could see, and he could see very, very far, that his colt was learning many new things when his people took him out. He learned how to tell which way to go from a metal in his mouth, what a harness felt like, and how to pull against it. He learned to wait patiently and go for many hours, how to stand for shoes to protect his feet. But true to his kind, he was gentle and patient, even when children climbed all over him.

As colt grew into a horse, oak noticed that he went longer and further away. Often, when he was gone a very long time, he could hear parade music floating over his leaves. He had to admit that most people seemed to pay more attention to his friend than to him, but he didn't mind. It made him happy to see people bring his friend the apples, carrots, and hard bread he loved so much; after all, oak needed so little to be so great!

A decade passed. His friend was more popular than ever. It was another spring. Cars stopped just to say hello now. He did have to admit that his friend was almost as majestic as he was, for a Belgium that is. And after all, he could march in many parades and events that made him very popular. He gave sleigh rides and hay rides and even pulled Santa Claus to town in December. His picture was on many posters because they were the best of friends. He didn't mind staying home and keeping his paddock safe.

Just about the time his last crinkled leaf left to make room for the small sweet ones, he did notice his friend didn't seem as lively as usual. Often his supper was left unfinished. He still went out for his spring work but he was very tired when he came back. Passers-by noticed that he didn't come over to them very often anymore. Many young people left get-well cards that were pinned to oak's trunk. Finally, his people called a veterinarian. Now oak had heard people talk and he knew it was sometimes very hard to get a veterinarian. Although he heard them say that even though there were more horses than ever, there were not as many veterinarians in proportion. With people not having to work as hard as they used to work, recreation was very important. Then oak decided to doze a little and think back to 1776 when he was just a little sapling. The road was just dirt and only an occasional coach or farm wagon went by on the way to Boston. Of course none of the animals drawing the carts were as handsome as his friend - which reminded oak that he had better see if he could help his friend.

An old, kind veterinarian who still enjoyed working with farm animals, did come to help. He examined his friend and did blood tests. Veterinary medicine had come a long way, but it wasn't like his people who could go to hospitals or even like those rich hunters down the street who got shipped across the country at great expense to get in the veterinary college to be treated.

Summer passed; oak's foliage was good, but not as magnificent as usual, because he grieved so for his friend. His friend didn't seem to need his shade as much as he did the warmth of the sun.

Fall came early. His friend tried to stay warm. He seemed so thin. He didn't even look up when oak dropped an acorn on him.

A quiet snow-fall continued to mount up. The stillness was peaceful. Oak was glad his friend was warm at last, safe in the arms of his roots.

--by Ruth Young

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

**The Round Robin is a square tavern
on a rectangular street.**

**It stands below a round sun and
oval clouds.**

**Linear people consume cylindrical
drinks.**

And everything is oblique.

--Rita Aeed

SAILS SUNSET

Waves of Wind
Sway Swells Chin

Bonito Prance
sunlight Dance

clouds Flit Fast
backdrop Cast

crown heavens King
rainbow Sings

Suns Slow Fade
sky bleeds Jade

Smite gilt Speck Seams
rays webs Stream

Flares Forth Leap
dusk still Creeps

Sizzle Spot Dies
flickered Skies

Days Dark Pall
below decks Call

ink night fills Deep
Wait?!
Star Specks Peep.

-Mark Whitney

I think that the best part of being a parent is watching the children as they learn to realize and do new things - like when they learn to walk for the first time, or when they begin to put together all their little words into sentences, or when they first ride off on their own two-wheeler.

SOARING

“That’s a girl - I’ll say you do your breathing exercises better than any of the other girls in here. You just keep on with your breathing as well as you’ve been doing. Remember now, if you feel the urge to push, honey, you just tell your husband and he’ll take care of the rest for you, okay?”

Amy opened her eyes and caught the wink Doctor Scannell had given her husband, Phil, but she didn’t mind it at all. The doctor was treating her like a child, and Amy loved it because that’s exactly how she felt. She pressed her lips tightly together, making her dimples seem even deeper than they really were, and nodded her head.

What the hell am I doing here - what in God’s name have I done? I’m a woman with a child’s thoughts and ways, giving birth to another child, and I’m frightened. I don’t want to grow up. I’m not ready. I don’t need someone depending on me. I’m the one who does the depending.... I’m the one with the cute little nose who makes silly mistakes that cause my husband to smile....my husband!

Amy opened her eyes and there was Phil standing beside her. One hand was holding hers while his other was making circles on her stomach, just like the milkstoppers she used to trace. Phil was dressed in a stiff white hospital gown. His big, broad shoulders made it impossible to tie the thing, so it just hung on him. His eyes, which were the only visible parts of his face, looked at Amy, filled with love and shining like the silver on her mother’s table at Thanksgiving. If the mask weren’t covering his face, Amy knew she would be looking at that wonderful, reassuring smile of his. A few short strands of his light brown hair spilled out from under his white paper hat. She was reminded of the big coffee stain on her mother’s old linen tablecloth. “I love you babe,” he said as he ran the cool cloth across her sweaty forehead.

Amy smiled. Another pain suddenly shot through her and she let out a piercing scream. I hate you.....right now I hate your guts, she thought, because you don’t want me to be your little girl any more. A spring in her head began to tighten.

“I love you too, Hon,” Amy answered out loud. Despite all the sweating she had been doing, the labor room was cold. What seemed to be thousands of white uniforms floated past the dull, blue walls - like doves, Amy thought, floating across the sky.

Doves....peaceful....carefree! Now I know I want to be a dove. I'd fly right straight home to Mama's house and I'd float up the stairs and the fourth and seventh steps wouldn't even creak. Then I'd float down the hall into my room. I'd land on my bed, get under the covers, and pull them way over my head and no one would know I was there.

The pains were getting worse and coming closer and closer together. Doctor Scannell came in to check her. Phil held her hand tighter. Amy was breathing harder and faster. Phil told her how proud he was of her and Doctor Scannell told her what a good job she was doing. Then the pain wasn't so bad.

"Doctor Scannell says our daughter won't be keeping us waiting too much longer, Hon," Phil told her. Amy smiled.

"Our daughter." The words pulled the spring in her mind even tighter. It's going to snap soon....the spring....it's so tense. Daughter, huh - most guys want a son. I knew he was trying to replace me. He doesn't want me to be his little girl any more. He wants to take it all away from me - my youth, my spirit, my dependence on him....he's killing me. The spring was stretching.

Doctor Scannell was back.

"How's my girl?" After another quick check, he announced, "Okay, this is it, Amy. We're going to take you into delivery now and Phil will be right there with you, okay?"

"I'm right here, Honey," Phil said as he patted her hand. The doves came floating over to her and perched themselves around her bed and then she was floating past the dull blue walls....through the double doors and into the delivery room.

"Okay, Amy, push! Push, Honey, push!"

There were all kinds of doves around her now, but they weren't floating, anymore - Just me - Amy thought. She felt Phil's grip tighten. I'll bet my wings that when his baby finally finds its way out, my husband will call me Mom and then he'll kiss his new girl and laugh at her funny nose and then he'll kiss her again and probably tell me he'll see me at the nursery window, or something. That's what he thinks, though, because when this child is born - Amy's thought were interrupted.

Here it comes! Amy was pushing harder than ever and the spring in her mind was about to snap because it was so tense. Phil wiped her head with the cool cloth and held her hand tighter. Amy wasn't floating anymore. Everything she had was in that last big push. It's a girl!

The spring let go and as it snapped free, it sounded like an infant's cry. Phil was kissing her now - right through his mask. Doctor Scannell placed the baby gently on Amy's stomach. Phil's eyes were filled with tears.

"I love you, Amy."

He called me Amy. Well, I guess I lose my wings....but before she did, Amy wrapped them gently around her precious daughter and said, "I love you, both."

She was peaceful now, like the doves, and she was floating again, but this time on a cloud with two others.

—by Alice Durkin

POEM

Joanne jiggles jugs.

Paul puts papers in proper places, precisely.

Donald doesn't doodle.

Priscilla permits promiscuous petting.

Rosie reads repetitious rubbish.

Never neglect noticing novices.

Every eagle escapes earth.

Quickly quit queer questions.

Huddled in a puddle, did you ever feel befuddled?

--Rita Aeed

THE HELPFUL SKELETON

One morning a young man decided to walk from "A" building to "C" building.

To get to "C" building from "A" building you must walk through "B" building.

When you walk through "B" building you must walk down a long, dark hallway.

While in the hallway he saw a skeleton from the Anatomy lab walking towards him.

He hid in a nearby closet and hoped the skeleton wouldn't come after him.

The skeleton opened the closet and said, "Are you hiding from me?"

The young man said, "No, I just lost my pen."

The skeleton said, "I'll help you find it."

The skeleton reached into the man's pocket, picked out a pen and then kissed him on the cheek.

--Comp. II En4402 27

THE TALISMAN

The night's heat had become intolerable. Everything's so maddeningly still, so silent! Restlessly, Leah threw aside the tangled sheets and slipped from her bed. She found her cigarettes on the low, bedroom windowseat, and slumped down on the narrow, comfortless sill. She lit a cigarette and began to smoke in nervous concentration, frowning straight into nothingness, her thoughts confused and distorted with fear.

The grandmother clock at the other end of the house chimed the hour with a steady resonance. Leah turned her head toward the distant sound, counting each separate tone....three-fifteen. Leah made an angry sound and buried her face in the bend of her arm. First madness and then insomnia, what next? Abruptly she straightened up, raking a hand back through her long curling black hair. "I have to get

a hold of myself." she whispered aloud, "They're just stupid, recurring dreams, not real!" and yet....Slowly, painfully, Leah forced herself to look at her right hand. She imagined she could see it throb in the half-light, and held it away from her as if it were no longer a part of her but something foreign. A thin, red slash ran crosswise, deep in the skin of her palm.

The night before, Leah had dreamt the same sleeping vision that she had been dreaming for as long as three months. The dream always proceeded in the exact same manner, up to now. The dream begins with Leah standing alone in oppressive darkness. A violent wind whips all around her, but she can hear nothing. She catches sight of a drifting, half-formed moon that hardly affects the surrounding gloom, and moves toward it, reassured by its faint light. Suddenly she is thrown backwards by a terrific bolt of lightning. After a moment, when she is able to see once more, Leah finds that she is perilously near the edge of a deep chasm. From her high vantage point, Leah can see, far below, a beautiful, peaceful valley, and people moving slowly through it. She tries to look closer, but the sight grows shadowed and she sees instead someone holding a dagger out to her, gesturing for her to take it. She reaches a hand to grasp it by the hilt, but somehow catches the arcing blade instead. At that moment the physical pain she always feels wakes her.

The dagger could exist only in her mind, still, how could she explain her lacerated palm? Spasmodically, she closed her hand and placed it at her side where she could no longer see it. Still, the angry inflammation made it hard to ignore. Leah shuddered. If it happens again, what shall I do?

The dream cut into her consciousness with a familiarity that astounded and frightened her. She felt as though she had somehow tapped into the soul of another person, but it had to be herself. What else could be the explanation? "Psychotic." she said aloud in the darkness, and then moved away from where she had said it.

Her doctor had gently offered her the usual cliches as remedies: "Rest, relaxation, get away from it all." But it was Jack who had finally decided her. Their relationship had of late become less than ideal. Constant, tiny, personality clashes had become a strain. He was of the old school, while Leah owned and managed her own growing business. The rest was inevitable, and to make matters worse, the dreams had begun to haunt her more frequently. Nothing seemed right anymore; she just had to get away for awhile.

Leah opened her beach cottage on the rocky, Maine coastline, hoping that a little rustic peace would give her time to learn her own mind. But it didn't seem to work. Here she was, unable to escape what she already feared had become a part of her.

Leah stubbed out her cigarette violently and reached for another. Pettishly she threw the whole pack across the room. Double-life, double existence, psycho! She smashed her fist onto her bureau, scattering rings and scarves. She couldn't be mad. If you're mad you don't realize it! Suddenly she had to get out of the house. She needed to walk and not think for awhile. She picked up the comfortable clothes she had worn earlier and dressed quickly. Already she felt better. She was doing something. Dwelling on madness was like dwelling on death. You couldn't do it sanely for long. She smiled at her inanity and moved silently through the dark, empty house, reluctant to dispell the muteness of the night.

When she reached the door to the kitchen she was brought up short by a loud rustling noise. A dark shape severed itself from the equally black shadows of the room. In a moment she was able to breath again as she realized it was only Talif, her Irish wolfhound. He stretchd in sudden wakefulness, and then moved closer to be scratched. How jittery she was. She knelt beside him, glad for a familiar presence. Talif would come with her.

They waded through windhissing cutgrass that smelled fresh with rain. Leah picked a cautious way over the wet rocks, while Talif bounded ahead, down to the private beach below. Once on level ground again, Leah was content to stand watching the sea. Her sense of confinement had vanished completely. A salt-wind caught at her hair and swept it across her face. Leah pulled it back, gazing upwards. Odd. No stars whatsoever. Only a bright, quarter moon. She shook her head uneasily, remembering the events of her dream. She called to Talif and turned toward the house.

Suddenly she was staggering in the path of an unbelievable wind. It came up from nowhere, causing all complex thought to be stilled. Instinctively Leah began to run, twisting away from the blinding sand. She tripped over something she recognized as Talif, and fell headlong to the ground. She groped for his collar and they huddled together, unable to find their way through the stinging wind storm. In the midst of it all a massive bolt of lightning struck the ground less than ten steps from where Leah and Talif cowered. Leah opened her mouth to scream but all sound was choked off by the noise of the storm. In that moment the storm ceased. Leah stared in shocked silence at the large, waste-deep hole left by the lightning. She swore she could still feel the erratic, sizzling heat of it on her skin. Impulsively she left Talif and walked to the edge of the blackened pit. The sand around it was still warm and the air was thick with an overpowering caustic smell. The bottom of the pit seemed to glow with a strange, patchy radiance. Curious, and unafraid now that the storm had ended, Leah lowered herself into the pit for a closer look.

The first thing she noticed was the total absence of sound. She also became aware of a tingling sensation caused by traces of static electricity. Outside the hole Leah saw the storm begin again in all its fury. Talif hesitated on the outer edge, bracing himself against the heavy wind. Inside the pit not a breath of wind disturbed the calm. Talif seemed reluctant to come down into that oddly-charged space where Leah stood spellbound. Without warning, Leah felt a second flash of lightning follow the first.

She felt no pain, only strange detachment. Like weightless fog she had no resistance to the wind. After the blinding flash of light she was cloaked in blind darkness. In her mind she reviewed her dream again, remembering that the lightning had stopped her from falling to her death. Only this was no longer a dream. She knew she had to be awake.

There came a change in the steady flow of the wind. Leah felt it slow and dissipate. The blackness lifted quickly, like a bandage from her eyes, and she found herself standing on the edge of the chasm, as in her dream. She thought she heard her name and turned to see the dagger again being held out to her. She ignored it and tried instead to see what person held it, shrouded in grey shadow. What do you want of me? she asked what she could only call a specter. Her words surprised her since they came from her mind and not from her lips. Take the dagger and go from here Leah, a voice said. It sounded like her own. Who are you? Why am I here? What is this place? Leah questioned. In response the stranger stepped out into the light. Leah was astounded, for here standing before her was the mirror image of herself. But you're me! she exclaimed stepping backwards. Her image shook its head. I am only that part of your consciousness that controls what is insubstantial and intangible in your being. My soul? The image nodded, If you wish. Are you the cause of the strange dream I have had again and again? asked Leah, half unbelieving. And the cause of my being here? Yes, but indirectly, since I move only in relation to your subconscious will. They why....? You yourself called upon me, here in the inner reaches of your being, to show you a way of escape from the pressures you faced in the concrete world. As an answer I gave you the dream to ponder. But like many others, you failed to see beyond its obvious connotation. Instead, you feared it as a turn to madness. It became necessary to bring you here, to make you understand. Understand what? asked Leah in a small voice, remembering that she had been searching for an escape for a long time, from her work, from Jack, from everything. Simply this Leah. You have a choice. You may, if you choose, stay here: a shade of your former consciousness, living alone and untouched by emotion or reality. Or you may choose to go back, taking this dagger as a symbol of your decision to continue living.

Leah turned away and looked down into the chasm and saw again the people walking there. There are others here....she said, wondering if she had a right to make such a choice. Yes, said the image behind her. They are the ones who made the decision to stay. You see them now as only a part of what they were. They wander in peace, but with no more purpose. They have closed their minds to reality, leaving their physical bodies, to move inward, lost forever from the concrete world. Leah watched them for awhile, listening to the silence. Then she made her decision. The image of herself already knew her answer. It held out to her the dagger. Without a backward glance, Leah reached for it. Wait Leah, she said, when you return to what you know to be reality, you will remember nothing of this place or the choice you made. What will remain in your mind will be a new thirst for life, and the dagger will remind you only of the harshness and changability of life's course. Now go, and never again regret your life. Leah moved her hand further and touched the silver-honed dagger. At that moment the dark and the wind closed in, hiding from her sight the image of her soul.

Sunlight flickered through Leah's half-closed lashes. She lay waiting for a sign, a reason for moving. She remembered everything that happened up to when the wind had begun to blow the sand with such fury. She moved her hand experimentally and it encountered deeply piled sand. Not dead. she thought to herself oddly, but then why should she be? Leah opened her eyes to prove that she was right. The beach was flooded with early morning sunlight. She felt she had never seen anything so magnificent. All around her the sand was smoothly flattened as if by a light rain. For some reason she had expected it to look different somehow. "Have you been out here all night?" Leah turned with a start to see Jack standing with Talif. "I tried to reach you, but when you didn't answer the phone, I got worried. Are you alright?" "Yes, I think so," she smiled. Jack looked very real to her, and secure. He helped her to her feet. "Hey, what's that?" he asked, pointing to her right hand. Leah looked down to see that she was clutching, of all things, a dagger, like the one in her dream. She looked at her hand and to her surprise it was unmarred. The deep gash had disappeared. "You're sure you're alright Leah." said Jack catching her bemused look. Leah nodded. "It's just that I'm trying to remember something, but I can't." "Well, let's go inside and eat some breakfast first," ordered Jack - as usual, the realist. Leah nodded in agreement and they started up the beach to the house, Talif running ahead. In her hand Leah held the dagger. She felt that it had special significance, only for her alone. She held it as she would a talisman, and looked ahead.

--by Diana Gosselin

PARNASSUS



SPRING '79